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MEDIA ADVISORY

NOVEMBER 8, 2006

USS Wasp (LHD 1) Returns from Surge Deployment

NORFOLK, Va. – Nearly 1,300 Sailors on the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1), along with a Mine Countermeasure Squadron (HM 14) Detachment, as well as elements of Assault Craft Units Two, Four and Fleet Surgical Team 2 will return to Norfolk on **Saturday, Nov. 11**, following a “surge” deployment in support of Joint Task Force Lebanon.

During the deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean, USS Wasp participated in the JTF Lebanon mission of providing support to the American Embassy in Beirut, and support to DoD approved humanitarian assistance efforts as requested by the Department of State.

After completing its JTF mission, USS Wasp was sent to Reykjavik, Iceland, to help further cement US-Icelandic Bilateral security arrangements. According to U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, Carol Van Voorst, the presence of Wasp in Iceland helped her show the Icelandic people the commitment the United States has to continuing relations with that country.

While on return transit to Norfolk, Wasp was redirected twice, to perform rescue-at-sea operations. On Nov. 2, Wasp received a request for medical assistance from the Chilean submarine, SSK Carrera, steaming more than 300 miles away. A Chilean sailor aboard the sub sustained injuries to his hand when a valve he was working on was accidentally closed. He was taken aboard Wasp, where doctors from Fleet Surgical Team Two began the process of examining him to determine the extent of his injuries. He then underwent surgery on his hand, and remains with Wasp for transport into Norfolk.

Less than 24-hours later, USS Wasp received instructions from 6th Fleet to change course again, and provide urgent medical assistance to a passenger aboard a civilian cruise liner. An elderly US veteran aboard the cruise ship Celebrity Century, which was on its way from Barcelona, Spain to Miami, Fla., fell and sustained a life-threatening injury. USS Wasp’s Level II medical capability and the embarked Norfolk-based Fleet Surgical Team Two provided an ideal emergency response. The well-equipped medical unit has many of the same capabilities as a civilian hospital, and is optimized for treatment of traumatic injuries.

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As USS Wasp steamed towards the cruise ship, she received word that there was not only one passenger, but two additional passengers in need of urgent medical attention beyond the capabilities of the cruise liner's medical staff.

Around 2:00 a.m. local time on Nov. 4, USS Wasp pulled along side Celebrity Century and sent over a medical team to examine the passengers. The medical evaluations took several hours, and due to the extent of the medical conditions the decision was made that it would be in the best interest of the patients to bring them aboard USS Wasp for transportation to the nearest land-based hospital.

Once the passengers were on board USS Wasp, it was learned that the most seriously injured man was actually a World War II veteran who had served the country as a U.S. Army Combat Photographer. Once within range of the Azores, the injured and their families were flown via an MH-53 Sea Dragon helicopter to the nearest hospital.

USS Wasp was able to continue on its homeward journey with only a slight change in schedule. USS Wasp is commanded by Capt. Michael D. Hawley, and on 14 November, will resume its role as Second Fleet Flagship.

This "surge" deployment is a testament to the Fleet Response Plan (FRP), and was designed to be flexible, and provide presence and support to joint and allied forces. The Fleet Response Plan allows the Navy to better respond to the increased demand for naval forces and address maintenance, training and operational employment during the FRP cycle. Because of this flexibility, a realignment of schedules made this deployment possible.

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NOTE: Media wishing to cover the homecoming of USS Wasp should contact Second Fleet Public Affairs Office at (757) 443-9850 (x47127) or MCC Swartz at (757) 232-6444 or email c2fpao@secondflt.navy.mil by 5 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 9.

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